NUMB. XLVI.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

——*Partes ſpeculamur in omnes.* CLAUD.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28. 1724.

IN my XXXVIth Paper, I publiſhed ſome Remarks on an excellent Old Ballad, called WILLIAM, and MARGARET. I was charm'd with the Strength, and Beauties, of its maſculine Simplicity: and, really, took it to *be*, what it *appear'd*, The Work of ſome Old Poet, long ſince *dead*; but I have been agreeably unceiv'd: The Author of it is alive, and a *Northriton*; I congratulate his Country, on the Promiſe f this riſing Genius: For the Gentleman, it ſeems, very young, and received his Education in the Univerſity of *Edinburgh*.

Among many fine Qualities, which adorn him, he ſo unconſcious of his own Merit, or poſſeſſes it with ſincere a Modeſty, that he declines being publickly am'd: But, as he has oblig'd me with a Letter, conining the ſhort Hiſtory of an unhappy Accident, hich gave Occaſion to his Ballad, it will be an greeable Entertainment if I publiſh it, as the Author nt it me.

SIR,

YOUR *Plain Dealer*, of *July* the 24th, was ſent to me by a Friend. I muſt own, after I had read it over, I was both ſurpriz'd and pleas'd to find, that a ſimple Tale of my Writing, had meritted the Notice, and Approbation, of the Author of the *Plain Dealer*.

'After what you have ſaid, of WILLIAM and MARGARET, I flatter myſelf, that you will not be diſpleas'd with an Account of the Accident which gave Birth to that Ballad.

'Your Conjecture, that it was founded on the real Hiſtory of an unhappy Woman, is true.——A vain, young, Gentleman, had, for ſome Time, profeſſed Love to a Lady, then in the Spring of her Life, and Beauty. He dreſs'd well, talk'd loud, and ſpoke Nonſenſe, with *Spirit:* She had good Underſtanding; but was too young to know the World. I have ſeen her, very often. There was a lively Innocence in her Look. She had never been addreſs'd to by a Man of *Senſe:* And, therefore, knew not, how deſpicable, and unſincere, a *Fool* is. In time, he perſuaded her, that there was Merit in his Paſſion.——She believ'd him, and was *undone*.

'She was upon the Point of bringing into the World the Effect of her ill-plac'd Love, before her Father knew the Misfortune. Judge the Sentiments of the good Old Man! yet his Affection outweighed his Anger. He could not think of abandoning his Child, to Want, and Infamy. He applied himſelf to her falſe Lover, with an Offer of Half his Fortune; But the Temper of the Betrayer was ſavag'd, with cruel Inſolence. He rejected the Father's Offers, and reproach'd the Innocence he had ruin'd, with the Bitterneſs of open Scorn. The News was brought her, when in a weak Condition, and caſt her into a Fever. And, in a few Days after, I ſaw her, and her Child, laid in one Grave, together.

'It was ſome Time after this, that I chanc'd to look into a Comedy of *Fletcher*'s, called, *The Knight of the burning Peſtle*. The Place I fell upon was, where old *Merry-Thought* repeats theſe Verſes;

When it was grown to dark Midnight,
And all were faſt aſleep:
In came Margaret's *grimly Ghoſt,*
And ſtood at William's *Feet.*

'Which, I fancy, was the Beginning of ſome Ballad, commonly known, at the Time, when this Author wrote.——Theſe Lines, naked of Ornament, and ſimple, as they are, ſtruck my Fancy; I clos'd the Book, and bethought myſelf, that the unhappy Adventure, I have mentioned above, which then came freſh into my Mind, might naturally raiſe a Tale, upon the Appearance of this Ghoſt.——It was, then, Midnight. All, round me, was ſtill, and quiet. Theſe concurring Circumſtances work'd my Soul to a powerful Melancholy. I could not ſleep. And, at that Time, I finiſh'd my little Poem, ſuch as you ſee it here. If it continues ſtill to deſerve your Approbation, I have my Aim; And am,

SIR,
Your moſt obliged,
and moſt humble Servant,
&c.

It *does*, moſt juſtly, continue to deſerve, and will, *for ever*, deſerve, not only Approbation, but the Applauſe, of all true Judges of Wit, and Nature. The Author's Copy, which he incloſ'd to me, is different in ſeveral Places, from that which fell into my Hands; but the Senſe of both, is exactly the ſame; and the Variation, in ſome Expreſſions, not conſiderable enough to make it neceſſary to re-publiſh that excellent Ballad.

Having this Occaſion to ſpeak of *Scotland*, I judge it the propereſt Place to inſert my Acknowledgment of a Letter from *Edinburgh*, ſign'd *Fergus Bruce*. I take this Name to be fictitious; but, whoever the *Writer* is, I am pleas'd with his *propos'd Correſpondence*, which will open a New Scene of Intelligence to the Expectation of my Readers; as they may ſee by the following Extract of the Letter itſelf, which is writ, with the Politeneſs of a Gentleman, and in the Stile of a Man of Learning.

Edinburgh the 16th of *July*, 1724.

SIR,

'THE firſt *Plain Dealer*, that came to my Hand, was that, wherein you repreſent, in true Colours, the Character, and Conduct, of the preſent Emperor of *Ruſſia*, with Regard to his Son, Prince *Alexei*.——My Fancy was charm'd, and my Judgment intirely ſatisfied, with the Account

'you

[Price Two-Pence.]

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'you gave: Our Coffee-Houſes take in your Papers, 'and I obſerve, with Pleaſure, the Welcome which 'our politeſt People receive them with. Not the 'Men alone, of all Ranks, but the Ladies alſo, 'make 'em their Entertainment. The general 'Converſation of both Sexes turns, on the Matter 'you afford.

'I cannot help writing to you, that I may let 'you know your Influence. It muſt be a Pleaſure 'to your generous Soul, to be conſcious of the Ex-'tent, and Power, of its Beneficence: And I ſhould 'be wanting in my Duty to the Man, who gives 'me Weekly Delight, and Inſtruction, if I con-'ceal'd from him, what might, any way, contri-'bute to his Satisfaction.

'I will preſume, if you pleaſe, to ſend you, now-'and-then, my Reflections, upon the Matter which 'the *Beaux*, and *Belles*, of this City, may furniſh, 'for a *Plain Dealer*. Something happens here every 'Day, not unworthy Publick Notice. And there 'are a Thouſand Things, that fall, naturally, under 'your Cognizance, that neither the *King*, the *Par-'liament*, the *Pulpit*, or the *Bench*, have any thing 'to do with. Perhaps, too, it would be of Uſe to 'our Gentry, at *Edinburgh*, to know, you have a '*Spy*, here, upon their Conduct. Pray tell them ſo, 'and depend on the moſt watchful Fidelity of,

S I R,

Your ſincere Friend,

and moſt humble Servant,

FERGUS BRUCE.

I cannot forbear confeſſing, that I ſhall expect, with a very ſenſible Pleaſure, the Event of this Northern Correſpondence: For I have retain'd, from my Infancy, a kind of affectionate Partiality, for the generous Bravery, and gallant Plainneſs, of our Brothers, beyond *Tweed*. When I travell'd, in my Youth, I ſcarce ever ſaw a Court, even in the remoteſt Parts of the civiliz'd World, where ſome Gentleman, or other, a *Scot*, by Birth, or Deſcent, was not, one, of its nobleſt Ornaments: And, now, ſince the *Muſes*, and the *Graces*, have, very viſibly, from the Beginning of the preſent Century, fix'd, and ſeated themſelves, in their learned Seminaries, their riſing Youth, of both Sexes, ſeem to vie, with one another, in a warm, and generous, Emulation, which ſhall moſt adorn their own, or ſooneſt match the Elegance, of other, even the politeſt, Nations.

Not the Gentlemen alone, but the very Ladies, of *Edinburgh*, form themſelves into ſelect, and voluntary, *Societies*, for the Improvement of their Knowledge, inſtead of the Entertainment of their Fancy: And go on, at the ſame Time, to refine their Converſation, inrich their Underſtanding, and poliſh, and render amiable, their Perſonal Deportment.

I ſhall, in the Courſe of my Obſervations, take Occaſion to demonſtrate the Truth of this Remark, by a Variety of Particulars; which, while they are doing Juſtice to the *North*, will contribute, in no ſmall Degree, to the Pleaſure of the *South* Part of this Kingdom. At preſent, I ſhall produce but Two Inſtances: And the Firſt is, A Society of Young Gentlemen, moſt, if not all of them, Students in the Univerſity of *Edinburgh*, who, from a Sympathy of Affections, founded on a Similitude of *Parts*, and *Genius*, have united themſelves into a Body, under Title of THE GROTESQUE CLUB; the Reaſon of which Name, I ſhall explain in a future Paper. Their Buſineſs, to expreſs it in the Words of one of their own Members, is, *A Friendſhip, that knows no Strife, but that of a generous Emulation, to excel, in Virtue, Learning, and Politeneſs.*

To how ſurprizing a Degree theſe fine Spirits have ſucceeded, in their noble *End*, let the following Sentiments declare; conceiv'd, and expreſs'd, with all the Clearneſs, Depth, and Strength, of an *experienc'd Philoſopher*, by a Member of this *Groteſque Club*, who was in his *Fourteenth Year only*, when he compos'd, in Blank Verſe, a Poem, now in my Hands; and founded on a Suppoſition of the Author's ſitting, a whole Summer Night, in a Garden, looking upward, and quite loſing himſelf, in Contemplation on *the Works, and Wonders, of Almighty Power.*——If this was a Subject, naturally above the Capacity of ſo very a Boy, to what a Degree does it increaſe our Wonder, when we find it treated, in this Maſterly Manner!

Now, I ſurvey'd my native Faculties:
And trac'd my Actions to their teeming Source.
Now, I explor'd the univerſal Frame;
Gaz'd Nature through, and, with interior Light,
Convers'd with Angels, and unbody'd Saints,
That tread the Courts of the Eternal King!
Gladly, I would declare, in lofty Strains,
The Power of Godhead, *to the Sons of Men.*
But Thought is loſt, *in its Immenſity!*
Imagination waſtes its Strength in vain:
And Fancy tires; *and* turns *within itſelf,*
Struck, with th' amazing Depths *of* Deity!
—— Ah! my lov'd God! in vain, a tender Youth,
Unskill'd, in Arts of deep Philoſophy,
Attempts to ſearch the bulky Maſs of Matter:
To trace the Rules of Motion: *and purſue*
The Phantom Time, *too ſubtle, for his Graſp!*
Yet may I, from thy moſt apparent Works,
Form ſome Idea of their wond'rous Author;
And celebrate thy Praiſe, *with rapt'rous Mind.*

How can I gaze upon yon ſparkling Vault,
And view the Planets, *rolling in their Spheres,*
Yet be an Atheiſt!—— *Can I* ſee *thoſe* Stars,
And think *of others, far beyond my Ken,*
Yet want Conviction of creating Power?
What, but a Being, of immenſe Perfection,
Cou'd, through unbounded Spaces, thus, diſpoſe
Such num'rous Bodies, All, preſumptive Worlds?
The undeſigning Hand of giddy Chance,
Could never fill, with Globes, ſo vaſt! ſo bright!
That lofty Concave!——

Where ſhall I trace the Sources *of the* Light?
What Seats aſſign to th' Element of Fire,
That, unconfin'd, through all the Syſtems, *breaks!——*
Here, cou'd I lie, in Contemplation wrapt,
And paſs, with Pleaſure, an eternal Age!
But, 'tis too much, for my weak Mind to know:
Teach me, with humble Rev'rence, to adore
The Myſteries, I muſt not comprehend!

Let this *prodigious Young Man*, bear the Blame, of my not having left myſelf Room in this Paper, to pay that Reſpect, which I intended, to THE FAIR INTELLECTUALS: A Club of Ladies, at *Edinburgh*, who ſet a Pattern to *Female Excellence:* And whoſe *Hiſtory, Rules*, and *Conſtitutions*, I have the Pleaſure to ſee, before me, with the conventual Addreſs of *Miſtreſs Speaker*, to the lovely *Siſterhood*; and the *admiſſory Speech*, of one of the Ladies: as ſet forth by the able Pen of *Miſtreſs Secretary.*——I ſhall ſay more, on a future Occaſion, of the Honour done to the whole Sex, by the dangerous Ambition of theſe Ladies: And of the Political Neceſſity, which, I conceive, there will ſoon be, of putting a Stop to the Progreſs of ſuch unlimitted Improvement of a Power, already too exorbitant!

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